

## LIEUTENANT COLONEL ROBERT K. ABERNATHY



Lieutenant Colonel Rob Abernathy is Commander, 23d Flying Training Squadron, Fort Rucker AIN Alabama. He is responsible for overseeing the Air Force's only Specialized Undergraduate Pilot Training – Helicopter program, Rotary Wing Qualification Course, and UH-1H Pilot Instructor Training for all USAF active duty, guard, and reserve pilots.

Lt Col Abernathy was born in National City, California. In 1986, he graduated from the University of New Mexico with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science, and was commissioned in the US Air Force. Soon after, he attended Undergraduate Helicopter Training at Fort Rucker, Alabama receiving his pilot wings in October 1987.

From 1987 to 1990, Lt Col Abernathy was assigned to Det 3, 37<sup>th</sup> Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, Grand Forks AFB, North Dakota. While at Grand Forks, he provided missile site support in the HH-1H helicopter. He served as ground safety officer and current operations chief. Lt Col Abernathy upgraded to instructor pilot prior to his selection for transition to the MH-53J Pave Low at Kirtland AFB, New Mexico.

In October 1990, Lt Col Abernathy was transferred to the 31<sup>st</sup> Special Operations Squadron, Clark AB, Republic of the Philippines. While there, he participated in the evacuation of Clark AB and Subic Naval Station due to the eruption of Mt. Pinatubo. From 1992 to 1994 Lt Col Abernathy was assigned to the 20<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron, Hurlburt Field, Florida, where he flew in support of operations in southern Iraq and Bosnia.

Lt Col Abernathy returned to Kirtland AFB in 1994 to join the 551<sup>st</sup> Special Operations Squadron where he served as a formal schoolhouse instructor. In 1995, he transferred to the 58<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Wing staff as flight safety officer and wing executive officer. Lt Col Abernathy participated in operations in Haiti in 1994 and was reassigned in 1997.

From 1997 to 1998 Lt Col Abernathy was assigned to the 20<sup>th</sup> Special Operations Squadron as standardization and evaluation chief. He left Hurlburt Field to attend the College of Naval Command and Staff in Newport, Rhode Island followed by a year at Maxwell AFB, Alabama where he attended the School of Advanced Airpower Studies.

In 2000, Lt Col Abernathy was reassigned to Headquarters United States Special Operations Command, MacDill AFB, Florida, where he served as Deputy Director, Future Concepts. In 2002, following his staff assignment, he was transferred to the 23d Flying Training Squadron where he served as Operations Officer flying the UH-1H "Huey" before assuming command in June, 2004.

Lt Col Abernathy is a command pilot with over 3000 hours. He holds masters degrees in Aeronautical Science, Embry-Riddle University; National Security and Strategic Studies, US Naval War College; and Airpower Art and Science, Air University. His major

decorations include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, Aerial Achievement Medal (1 OLC), and Air Force Commendation Medal (3 OLC).

Lt Col Abernathy is married to the former Sue Pehr of Albuquerque, New Mexico. They have two children, Christy and Will.